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PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

SESSION 1863-64.

First Meeting, November 9, 1863.

[ISSUED 31ST DECEMBER, 1863.]

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, K.C.B., PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*William Balfour, Esq.; Lieut. A. J. Clarke (late I.N.); Capt. J. G. Goodenough, R.N.; Sir Joseph Paxton, M.P.; James Walker, Esq.; J. W. Walton, Esq.; Henry Wood, Esq.*

ACCESSIONS and DONATIONS.—Among the numerous Donations to the Library and Map-rooms since the previous Session were—‘A Mining Journey across the Andes,’ by Major F. I. Rickards. ‘The Island of Formosa,’ by R. Swinhoe, Esq. ‘South American Sketches,’ by T. W. Hinchcliffe, Esq. Vol. xvi. and last of the ‘Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography.’ ‘A Winter in Upper and Lower Egypt,’ by G. A. Hoskins, Esq. Continuations of Transactions of various Societies, &c. &c. Maps of Belgium, on various scales, by M. Van der Maelen. Continuation of Coella’s Atlas, on 10 sheets. Geological map of Sweden, on 5 sheets. Philip’s Atlas, Part 17. Angola, on 2 sheets, by Visconde de Bandeira; presented by the Rev. R. T. Lowe. ‘Iceland, its Scenes and Sagas,’ by Sabine Baring Gould, M.A., by the Assistant Secretary; Maps of Province of Canterbury, by Dr. Haast; and Island of Java, by W. F. Versteeg, &c. &c.

EXHIBITIONS.—View of the Snow Mountains of Kilima-njaro, Eastern Africa. A Map of Scinde Railway, showing a general plan of the line; presented by J. Brunton, Esq., Engineer to the Company. Two ancient Maps on vellum, lithographed from an atlas to Ptolemy’s Geography of 27 maps on vellum by Arnold Buckinck. Rome, 1478; presented by Hudson Gurney, Esq.

In opening the Session, the President, SIR RODERICK MURCHISON, made the following Address:—

Now that we are re-assembled in the metropolis for this our thirty-fourth Session, we commence our operations with a consideration of several subjects of great interest relating to Africa. Whilst we are

all waiting with impatience for the issue of that work which will bring out the interesting details of those great and successful adventures, by which our countrymen Speke and Grant, traversing tropical regions never before visited by any European, determined the main sources of the Nile, we naturally begin by doing honour to the Hanoverian nobleman, the Baron von Decken (now sitting near me), who, fitting out, at his own expense, a scientific expedition, has explored the loftiest mountain known to us in Eastern Africa. The German missionary Rebmann, who had reached the foot of that mountain, had indeed informed us that, both from what he heard and what he saw at a distance, this mountain was capped by snow. His story was, however, met by scepticism on the part of many persons, including myself, inasmuch as we had then no good evidence to sustain the belief that any portion of the mainland to the north-west of Zanzibar, so near to the coast and almost under the Equator, attained a sufficient altitude to account for the existence of snow upon its summit. Now, Baron von Decken, after two ascents, has, by his perseverance and energy, swept away my doubts; for, after he had examined the flanks of that mountain, and laid down its geographical features, he ascended it to very nearly 14,000 feet above the sea, as determined by both barometer and boiling-water, and having by trigonometrical measurements determined that the summit exceeds 20,000 feet in height, and having ascertained that, when he visited the mountain, the snow-line descended to below 16,000 feet, the snow falling during a short interval to below 13,000 feet, he has satisfactorily established and set before us a grand and new phenomenon in the physical geography of Africa.

It is not to be forgotten that, before he began his journeys to Kilima-njaro, Baron von Decken made a gallant endeavour to proceed from Kiloa, and reach the spot in the interior where Roscher was murdered, in the hope of obtaining the papers of that intrepid traveller, but was compelled to relinquish his object owing to the desertion of his porters and the hostility of the Arab traders.

In his chief expedition, Baron von Decken, meeting with my lamented friend the late Mr. Richard Thornton, who went out with Dr. Livingstone, but who was at that time at Zanzibar, engaged that able and zealous young geologist to accompany him; and I was happy to learn that poor Mr. Thornton, to whose merits I recently called the public attention, was of great use to Baron von Decken in aiding in the construction of the map, an outline of which you now see before you, and which will be rendered much more complete when the calculations, which Mr. Thornton worked out before he lost his life on the Zambesi, shall have been received.

In the mean time I may state that Baron von Decken having submitted to me some specimens of rocks which he has brought to Europe, I find that, whilst on the lower flanks of Kilima-njaro there are micaceous gneissic rocks, hard calcareous sandstone, and felspathic rocks, the higher zones of the mountain consist of unquestionable igneous rocks of older date below, with obsidian and trachyte at the highest altitudes reached; thus proving that the lofty summit has been raised by volcanic action, though there are no proofs of any eruption in the modern period.

But, Gentlemen, the Baron von Decken is not a man to do things by halves. Although what he has already achieved is sufficient to establish a high reputation among African travellers, he is not content with having mastered the monster Kilima-njaro, but is resolved to grapple with its rival peak, called Kenia, which, although not yet reached by any geographer, has been placed in Arrowsmith's last map upon the very line of the Equator, and about 200 miles to the north of Kilima-njaro.

Having left behind him one of his companions, Dr. Kärsten, an accomplished chemist and astronomer, and who is to rejoin him at Zanzibar, Baron von Decken has come to our country to *equip* (I speak in a geographical, not an international sense)—to equip himself, at considerable cost, with a long river steamer, which, though it be built of iron, is not to be a *ram*, nor is it to have any warlike contrivances. In this vessel he purposes to ascend one of the rivers in or near to Formosa Bay (possibly the Juba), and so penetrate rapidly into the interior, either towards Mount Kenia, or, if foiled in that object, to Gondokoro viâ Kaffa.

I must here mention a circumstance which is much to the credit of the noble Duke who now worthily presides over the Admiralty. Baron von Decken had expressed to me his hope that, in passing his vessel over the bar of the river he chose to ascend, he might be assisted by one of the British cruisers in those seas; and on my representing this wish to the Duke of Somerset, his Grace at once acceded to the request, and orders were sent to the Admiral at the station of the Cape to lend all necessary aid to this meritorious traveller.

I may also take this opportunity of announcing that Baron von Decken would be glad to receive the services, in his forthcoming expedition, of some competent young artist to sketch the landscape as well as the inhabitants and wild animals of the regions he may traverse.

Such devotion as that which the Baron von Decken has shown, and is showing, in the cause of African discovery, calls indeed for

our warm commendation; and I feel certain that you all wish God speed and a successful issue to the chivalrous endeavours of a Hanoverian nobleman, who, rivalling our foremost travellers, reminds me of those days when his countrymen in our own German Legion won the praise and regard of every British officer, and brings at once to my mind those great recent African discoveries in which Barth, Overweg, and Vogel have been so eminently distinguished as members of British expeditions. I will only add, what you will be happy to learn, that the Council have this day elected Baron Charles von Decken an Honorary Corresponding Member of the Royal Geographical Society.

By the letter of that fine young man the late Mr. Richard Thornton, which will be read, and which was written shortly before his lamented death, you will perceive how hard he worked to develop the mineral structure, as well as the physical geography, not only of the tracts around Kilima-njaro, but also of the countries watered by the Zambesi and Shiré, or what may well be called the great Livingstone region. His loss is deeply to be deplored, as it is to be feared that some of his conclusions were not matured when he was seized with his last and fatal illness.

As Mr. Charles Livingstone and Dr. Kirk, both members of the Livingstone Expedition, are once more happily among us, they will, I hope, in awaiting the arrival of their celebrated chief, convey to us much valuable information respecting the countries of the Zambesi and the Shiré.

Short as is the letter referring to the last operations of Dr. Baikie, it cannot but excite in us an earnest desire to hear more of his last enterprise, and to learn that this accredited envoy of our Government, who has long been doing good service in introducing habits of honest trade among the native chiefs high up the Niger, has, in penetrating far into the interior, obtained important fresh knowledge, and has at the same time widely extended our good name among the natives of Africa.

Let us hope that, under such humanising influences, the barbarous conduct of the chief who murdered the accomplished and amiable Dr. Vogel may never be repeated; whilst I am sure you will listen with deep interest to the lively description of the habits of the natives which poor young Vogel gives us in the familiar letters to his mother and Mr. Hinde, which will be brought before you.

I may now announce that I have received a long letter from Mrs. Petherick, dated Khartûm, July 26, which gives a very touching narrative of the dangers and difficulties which beset her husband

and herself, first on the White Nile far above Khartûm, and afterwards in the endeavour to travel westwards, amid many perils and disasters, by Khol and Ngam Gara to the former ivory station of Mr. Petherick, or Nyam-Bara, whence they passed through a most interesting country to Gondokoro. The letter is written with much feeling, and makes known to us that Mr. Petherick was lying too unwell at Khartûm to be able to write himself.

I am also bound to make known that Mrs. Petherick states that her husband had rendered himself unpopular in that region by his efforts to check the trade in slaves.

This letter, or portions of it, may be read before the Society as soon as we receive advices from Mr. Petherick explanatory of his geographical researches. The state of his health, we must presume, has prevented him from transmitting to us, as we had a right to expect before now, some account of his travels; particularly as I learn from one of his companions, Mr. Murie, an able naturalist, who has arrived in England, and who is present on this occasion, that many astronomical observations were made during the expedition, all of which were registered in books. Although the main object for which we subscribed our money—the succour of Speke and Grant—was, through the disasters of Petherick, to a great extent delayed, I trust that we may yet be furnished with such an amount of geographical data, particularly in reference to the hitherto untravelled country between Nyam-Bara and Gondokoro, as will satisfy geographers that the pecuniary means which they placed at the disposal of Mr. Petherick have not been expended without affording us some good results.

Lastly, I have to announce that our associate, Mr. Tinné, who is present, has received letters of the 1st July from his relatives the Dutch ladies, whose travels have excited so much interest; and, if time permit, he will communicate an outline of this correspondence.

The first Paper read was—

1. *On the Snowy Mountains of Eastern Equatorial Africa.* By the Baron CHARLES VON DECKEN.

AFTER apologising for the meagreness of the present communication, consequent on all his papers being at Zanzibar, the author mentioned that, on leaving Mombas, he proceeded southward along the coast to Wanga, and thence struck westward up the river Umba. On reaching the Ugono range, 5000 feet high, he found himself among a well-formed race, sufficiently civilized to smelt iron—very rudely, certainly—but with sufficient success to enable them to